

Transcript of Reagan Interview on a Range of Foreign Issues

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 11 — Following is a transcript of an interview with President Reagan today by Bernard Weinraub, Hendrick Smith, Leslie H. Gelb and Gerald M. Boyd, all of the Washington Bureau, as transcribed by The New York Times.

Military Balance

Q. We just want to start off with some foreign policy questions first. O.K.?

A. All right.

Q. And a question on arms control: Are we going into negotiations in a position of inferiority?

A. That we are not up to the strength level of the Soviet Union — Q. Right.

A. — militarily?

Q. Yes.

A. I don't think there's any question of that. The — and we have been for quite some time — we have fewer, for example, nuclear weapons. We have fewer warheads than we had in 1947. But I think in one way we're going in a stronger sense than we have in recent years. Because over recent years we've followed a kind of unilaterally disarming and the idea that maybe the others would follow suit.

This time, with the refurbishing of our military defenses we've been undergoing for these four years, we're going in a table and we're going in a knowledge that not only are we stronger than we were, even though we've not caught up with them as yet, but they have the awareness that we're determined to not allow them to have a superiority over us to the extent that our forces would be a deterrent. And I think in that regard we sit down at the table with them in the past.

Q. Isn't there a — statements by President and by Secretary of State George Shultz to the effect that we have been able to maintain a kind of military balance in the few years and that otherwise we could not negotiate on an even basis?

A. Well, I was trying to be completely accurate here but obviously we have not completely caught up with the imbalance betwixt us. For example, we have in uniform 17 divisions. They've got more than that on the Chinese border. And we have not caught up with the naval buildup. But the fact that we are doing — the fact that there are 24 more ships, I believe, out there, scheduled for addition to the fleet — that is what I think brings us to the table. They have — they know our industry and they know that we've set our mind to it. So they know that there's been a change of attitude. We are not getting weapons systems without getting anything in return. And from that standpoint I think this is — our attitude is different now and they can't look down the road and see a point at which they won't have any kind of superiority. And they don't have enough of a margin today, I think, to tempt them into a — a first strike.

Treaty Violations

Q. On the subject of arms control treaty violations, you and your administration have said for several years that the Soviets are violating these treaties. A, what do you intend to do about that and B, would you sign treaties in the future without clearing up those matters?

A. Well, I think all of that is part of what has to be negotiated and probably under the cap of — the part of the negotiations that I feel is verifiable. In other words, it's not enough to have an agreement. It's got to be a verifiable agreement. And some of the violations that they're doing are violations of what has been negotiated. They're trying to overthrow a Government that the majority of the people elected. In Nicaragua, the so-called Sandinistas would overthrow a Government that seized power out of the barrel of a gun — it's never been chosen in the polls. And they've overthrown the principles of the revolution they were fighting, and I think that's a great deal of information. And all of these will be part of the negotiations.

Q. Do these violations block the possibility of another agreement until they are cleared up?

A. Now we get into the area of the actual negotiating, and I don't think it's necessary to discuss that — those particular facts of what we are going to do, what we are going to do, what we are going to do. I don't think that should be voiced in advance.

Outlook for Philippines

Q. Mr. President, to shift to another subject, there are people in Congress who are talking about the situation in the Philippines with the opposition parties in turmoil. They're saying that the Philippines are our next Iran. Do you see the Philippines that way? Do you agree?

A. I certainly hope not. We're trying to be as helpful as we can in that situation. The Philippines and the United States certainly has a close relationship and alliance over the years, and we've got a good relationship with President Marcos. Now, we realize there is an opposition party and we believe in a free democracy. We also are aware that there is another element in the Philippines that has Communist sympathies and backing. What we are hopeful of is that the democratic processes will take place, and even if there is a change of party there will be an opposition faction which is still democratic in its principles. I think it would be a disaster for us if there were of the friction between those two parties, the third element, the Communist element, should get in, because we know that their result is always totalitarian.

Q. Do you feel there are certain steps that should be taken in order to prevent that from happening. Either by the government or by the opposition?

A. I hope that both parties are

Opposition in Seoul

Q. Sir, on South Korea, let me just ask you, given today's news, do you think that some of these Americans who were accompanying the opposition leader there were, in fact, meddling as well?

A. It's just that I think there was bad judgment on both sides. Q. You mean the Americans as well as the Korean officials?

A. Yes, and it's tended, certainly here in the treatment of this — it's tended to hide the fact that Korea South Korea — has made great strides in democracy — that they have a prosperity that is far beyond that of a great many of their neighbors in that part of the world — their democracy is working, and — this was just, I think, some bad judgment there on both sides.

Policy on Nicaragua

Q. Could we talk about Nicaragua? There seems to be a stalemate there. You're not providing aid to the contra now. There are no negotiations that are going on. What are we planning to do in the way of policy to get something going that might bring about the kind of Nicaragua that you would like?

A. Well, I'm going to continue to ask the Congress to let us and all of us in America to continue to have a kind of program that was born of the Kissinger-led commission down there, in which 75 percent of the world's population live in social and economic aid to try and make these countries more self-sufficient and self-reliant. And the reason so many of those countries by simply helping them become more viable economically, and at the same time giving them help and security so they're not victims of subversion, particularly from outside of their own countries.

But with regard to Nicaragua, I think that we should continue to offer support to the people of Nicaragua who have been betrayed in the revolution that they themselves supported. And we should continue to offer support to the people of Nicaragua who have been betrayed in the revolution that they themselves supported. And we should continue to offer support to the people of Nicaragua who have been betrayed in the revolution that they themselves supported.

Relations With Cuba

Q. Sir, just — excuse me — back to Latin America — Fidel Castro said recently that he saw possibilities for improving relations with the U.S. Do you see any possibility of a U.S. — of you or the Government improving relations with Castro?

A. Well, I'm not very optimistic, because we've heard this before. Early in my administration there were signals sent of this kind, and we took them up on it, and we tried to have some meetings with them and nothing came of it. Their words — they're never backed by deeds. There are very simple things that they can do to indicate that they were ready to change.

Policy in Middle East

Q. On the Middle East, Mr. President, do you expect a current review of the arms-sale policy to result in some kind of change in U.S. policy in the region?

A. Well now, you're asking about Q. The Middle East.

A. In arms policies, though.

Q. Yes, you're conducting a review of arms.

A. Yes.

Q. — policy.

A. Well, I'm still dedicated to that Sept. 1, 1982, provision of a negotiated peace. I don't believe it can be achieved without King Hussein of Jordan, and with — or at least with the permission of the Palestinians, representing them in direct negotiations with the Israelis. And when we — we are prepared to be of whatever help we can be. We're not seeking to impose a settlement on anyone. We haven't got some plan of how it must be worked out.

But I feel that we have to make the Middle East Arab states and Israel as the friend of Israel. And this could be achieved in our trying to help peace negotiations. And part of this would be — they're under threat — there's a war going on just minutes away from continuing. But the progress that we've made is such that there is no reason anymore to try to keep a group in existence on the basis of animosity and anger.

Q. Well, how do you really get that message to the black community if you don't deal with black leaders?

A. Well, I think that — now what constitutes black leadership? I have been meeting with an awful lot of people that have — I think, achieved quite some prominence in their work in that field. And, as I say, Roy Ennis of CORE, he sees this exactly the same way. I'm perfectly willing to say these same things to the people that are in the organizations where a few of the leaders seem to be, very frankly, more interested in some political differences than they are in resolving the problem.

Q. Mr. President, shift to a totally different area — Poland. Does the trial and the conviction of those four police officers and the murder of that Catholic priest constitute any kind of a step on the part of the Polish Government that justified, in your mind, relaxing any of our sanctions or making any moves toward Poland to ease the situation and improve it?

A. I honestly don't think that it reflects any change. I think it reflects something that went wrong, and the Government doesn't mind throwing somebody to the wolves in order to keep the sleigh going ahead of the wolf pack.

Q. A fundamental change internally, therefore no reason for us to change our policy?

A. No.



The New York Times/Paul Hooten

President Reagan during interview yesterday in the Oval Office.

weapons that you've proposed, would you still want to proceed with this Strategic Defense Initiative or would you be ready to call it off in return for that?

A. No, I would want to proceed with what we're doing, which is research to discover whether there is such a weapon and whether it is practical, feasible, and then I myself said that my own view would be that if that is determined and we can produce such a weapon, that then before deployment, to negotiate then before there would be any deployment or anything, to make sure that they understood that we weren't trying to create the ability of a first strike ourselves, that our goal was still the elimination of nuclear weapons, and that I would use that defensive weapon as another step in attaining that goal.

But if we can say that this virtually makes those weapons, if not obsolete, certainly most ineffective — the real weapons — then we've got a real reason for saying we'd like to do away with them. Because we've come up with this defensive weapon. That would eliminate any of the protests that some of the people on the Soviet side have made that we're seeking a first strike capability. I don't think anyone could honestly believe that the United States is interested in such a thing or ever would want to do that position.

Q. So proceeding with the Strategic Defense is independent of whatever agreement is reached —

A. That's right.

Q. — on offensive weapons?

A. Because it's not in violation of the ABM treaty, and they have been conducting — you know, who are they kidding? They've been conducting research in a sort of thing for a long time. And they already have far beyond anything we have, and we believe in violation of the ABM treaty of that kind of defense. And we're seeking a nonnuclear weapon that could render these weapons obsolete.

Q. As part of the comprehensive review you're doing on the Middle East, are you thinking of connecting arms sales to the peace process?

A. Well, we have — you know, there have been, we have made some arms sales in a number of instances. Actually, what I feel is necessary is — this year, as part of the comprehensive review, we've sincerely intended to be our friends also. That we're not in every way an opponent.

Q. Mr. President, on the question of black leaders, you've criticized black leaders recently as — as representing a special interest and being concerned about their own jobs and positions. Assuming that that might be true, how do you then plan to keep in touch with the black community if you're not doing it through these black leaders?

A. Very willing to do it through those who are and. And there were meetings here, and they came to naught. What I said there is a general thing that I was saying, not about all — because there are leaders of quite prominent black groups, like Roy Wilkins of CORE, who is — agrees completely with what I said.

But I think it is something that happens in government bureaucracy — that are set up to solve a certain problem. But once the bureaucracy is set up, it's quite willing to admit that the problem has been solved because there's no longer any need for the bureaucracy. And I think that there is some element of this. If — and we've — see, I've just lived longer than the rest of you.

I remember when things were very much different — not from reading about them, from seeing them. And I think that there is an unwillingness on the part of some leaders to bring the attention or remind the people they represent how much progress has been made because — and again, as I say, because if you do, they might then say, well, then, what are we still doing for?

Now, granted, we have not totally eliminated all the problems. There are a lot of us that are still heart and away from them by far. But the progress that we've made is such that there is no reason anymore to try to keep a group in existence on the basis of animosity and anger.

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Offense vs. Defense

Q. Mr. President, taking it back to the question of your Strategic Defense Initiative. Throughout history there's always been a question of offense being able to overcome defense. — that I've used here among our own people. World War I — poison gas came into being for the first time, and that was in 1918. In 1935 all the nations of the world met in Geneva and ruled out poison gas in future war. But by that time the gas mask had been developed, and gas masks have been standard soldier equipment in just about every army in the world, ever since 1928. We haven't thrown the masks away. But now we're talking about a weapon that has been developed for which there is no defense whatsoever. The only program we have is MAD — Mutual Assured Destruction. And why don't we have MAD instead — Mutual Assured Security.

Now we all know how to make that weapon. Suppose we were so successful at the arms talks that we all agreed to do away with it, just as we agreed to do away with poison gas. And the years go by, but we all know how to make it. You can't take out of the world the idea of the gas mask that we now have. And sometimes in a time of stress — and whether it's two great countries or some other country — somebody is going to say, just as they have in recent years, maybe it would be handy for us to produce a few of these things. And you wouldn't be able to tell if they had or not. But at least your security would be your own and of gas masks — that somebody does cheat, after you've tried to eliminate them, and comes up with those, you'd have a weapon in which you could knock them down, just as today, you could put on the gas mask if somebody cheats and decides to use poison gas.

So I think it would be well worth having, and then, of course, there's the possibility that you can't get everybody to eliminate those weapons, as we're seeking to do, and therefore you have made a — through defense, you've changed the whole ratio. The opponents might want to be expansionist and resort to war — has to say in the face of that defensive weapon — how many of these things do I have to have before I can be sure that they can't blow me out of the water.

Q. Mr. President, you've talked at times of two different kinds of a defense. One, defending cities, the whole population. Somebody referred to it as an Astro-turf defense, and I think you've changed the whole ratio. The opponents might want to be expansionist and resort to war — has to say in the face of that defensive weapon — how many of these things do I have to have before I can be sure that they can't blow me out of the water.

A. I want a defense that simply says that if somebody starts pushing the button on those weapons, we've got a good chance of keeping all or at least the bulk of them from getting to the target. Because if it's around mis-

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Plan for 1983

Q. One last question, if I might, Mr. President. Won't you have to support George Bush in '83? Won't you have to endorse him or support him?

A. Well now, you have to be a rock and a hard place, because I have to tell you, I have said that I've been the finest Vice President I ever have. And he's been all of those things. But at the same time in this job, you are a little head of the party and as such you've kind of got a responsibility to the party function and make its decisions. Now it's not an easy thing for me to think about, but I have to keep that in mind.

Q. So you won't support him under any circumstances?

A. What?

Q. You won't endorse him under any circumstances?

A. Let me just say it's a decision I have made — I have made a decision. I'm just not going to think about it. I'll be like Scarlett O'Hara, I'll think about it tomorrow.

Q. Don't your comments almost make him a logical successor to you?

A. What?

Q. I mean, your praise of him and the performance of the office, doesn't that make him a logical successor?

A. Well, I have to say that I'm a realist. I'm considering, they would have to recognize who's had the most contact with what's going on.

Q. Thank you.

Reagan Getting Shots To Combat Allergies

WASHINGTON, Feb. 11 — President Reagan said today that he had completed a set of shots to combat nagging allergies that have plagued him for a number of years.

The treatment is designed to improve the body's tolerance against a particular allergy and produce cold-like symptoms. Mr. Reagan sounded as if he was recovering from a cold during an interview with The New York Times.

The President explained that he had suffered from allergies for some time and had viewed them as psychosomatic at first. "I always looked down my nose at them," he said, adding that he regarded them as something that occurred only during "brief periods in the spring."

But when he went to Sacramento in 1981 to begin his first term as Governor of California, he said, he was suffering so much that his wife, Nancy, convinced him he should do something about the problem.

Tests showed, he said, that he was allergic to several things, including house dusts and some products used to make upholstery. He said that under the treatment he was receiving he was injected with substances that trigger the allergies in the hope of building up his tolerance against them.

The White House spokesman, Larry Speakes, said the President had taken the shots on a regular basis, although he did not know how frequently.

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